



Religious Studies



Religious Studies



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Welcome

In today's world the detailed study of religion and all its complexities is critical for us all. Religion has become increasingly visible in society, manifested in debates around the wearing of veils in Islam, the legitimacy of homosexuality in Christianity, the place of atheism in the West, the nature of religious violence and terrorism, and the relation of religion to politics, to name but a few.

Lancaster was the very first university in the United Kingdom to offer a degree in Religious Studies, as opposed to Theology. Innovative and controversial at the time, this was a degree scheme in which all the major religions of the world were studied in equal depth, and in which no one religion would dominate over the others. It also employed multiple disciplines – philosophy, sociology, anthropology, theology, and textual and linguistic studies – to develop as full and rounded an understanding as possible of those religions themselves.

The Lancaster method of studying religion became a model for Religious Studies programmes elsewhere in Britain and all around the world. Today, many of the world's leading scholars of religion trained at Lancaster and still look to Lancaster as their intellectual home. For all of us, teachers and students alike, it is a privilege to be a part of this prestigious heritage, and we hope that you too will be interested in joining us.

Get in touch



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#1

Research Impact

Most recent Research Excellence Framework

#2 (joint)

Research Environment

Most recent Research Excellence Framework

#8

Complete University Guide 2017

#3

Overall Research

Most recent Research Excellence Framework

What is Religious Studies?

- learning about beliefs, values, practices and worldviews from around the globe
- understanding the complexities of world events today
- challenging assumptions about how religion is portrayed in the media and by politicians
- examining the relationship between religion, conflict, and violence
- studying multicultural Britain
- experiencing different cultures
- reading closely and critically the original sources of the world's major religious traditions
- examining the relationship between religion and gender
- learning about new religious movements and non-traditional spiritualities
- assessing the philosophical dimensions of religious traditions
- developing sensitivity to different perspectives
- thinking critically

You will be taught by staff with a national and international reputation for both teaching and research. We have one of the lowest staff to student ratios in the UK, meaning you will learn in a friendly and collegial atmosphere.



Degrees and entry requirements

Degree	Award	UCAS code	Typical offer
Religious Studies	BA	V627	AAB-ABB
Ethics, Philosophy and Religion	BA	VV56	AAB-ABB
International Relations & Religious Diversity	BA	6B71	AAB-ABB
Philosophy and Religious Studies	BA	VV65	AAB-ABB
Politics and Religious Studies	BA	LV26	AAB-ABB
English Literature and Religious Studies	BA	QV36	AAA-AAB
History and Religious Studies	BA	VV16	AAA-AAB
Social Work, Ethics and Religion	MSW	L5V6	ABB
Religious Studies and Sociology	BA	VL63	AAB-ABB
Religious Studies with Chinese	BA	1C19	AAB-ABB

New degree programmes

International Relations and Religious Diversity

This degree explores the intersection of International Relations and Religious Diversity in contexts around the globe, including Europe, North America, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia.

Social Work, Ethics and Religion

You will complete this ground-breaking Integrated Masters degree with a professional qualification to practice Social Work, a background in the world's major religious and ethical traditions, a deep awareness of cultural diversity, and an informed understanding of the conflicts and challenges facing the contemporary world.

Teaching and assessment

You will learn through a combination of lectures, small group seminars and independent study. The hours you will spend on these three elements will be roughly equivalent to a full time job but you should expect peaks in your workload around assignments or when preparing for exams.

Typical weekly contact hours

	Lectures	Seminars
Year 1	6hrs	3hrs
Years 2 and 3	6hrs	2hrs average

Assessment

There is assessed coursework and exams throughout all three years. For most modules, exams count for 60% of your mark, coursework for 40%. First year marks do not contribute to your final degree classification.

Specialisation in your third year

You will focus closely on areas that have been of particular interest to you over the course of your studies. You may choose to complete a dissertation on a subject of your choice; if you chose this option you will work one to one with an academic over two terms to produce your 10,000 word dissertation. There are also "special subject" modules, where you will work in small groups and focus on specific topics, texts or issues in religion with a member of academic staff.

Degrees in-depth

Religious Studies BA (Hons)

You will engage with the major religious traditions from around the world and the major approaches to studying religion; you will study religion in a variety of different cultural contexts and from a number of different perspectives, including sociological, anthropological, historical, textual, philosophical, psychological and theological.

You will examine religious traditions in modern and contemporary contexts, considering religious conflict and issues like gender and religion.

Year 1 modules

RELIGIONS OF THE
MODERN WORLD

+

ETHICS, PHILOSOPHY
AND RELIGION

+

POLITICS AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
IN THE CONTEMPORARY
WORLD

or

MINOR SUBJECT

or

INTRODUCTION TO
PHILOSOPHY

or

MINOR SUBJECT

Religions of the Modern World

Studying four of the world's major religious traditions: Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam; you will explore the way they address life's fundamental questions. This module will inform your choices about the direction you want to take in your second and third years.

Ethics, Philosophy and Religion

You will examine a range of core themes and perspectives, including western and Asian philosophical and religious ethics, the authorities upon which ethical standpoints are grounded, and the implications of evolution for religion and ethics.

Politics and International Relations in the Contemporary World

You will be introduced to some of the key areas of Politics and International Relations. The module tells a story about the 20th century that will enable you to make sense of the 21st century world. You'll begin by examining the consequences of the First World War; then go on to consider the key events and ideas that transformed societies in complex ways following it.

Introduction to Philosophy

Introduces you to a range of philosophical topics. You will consider knowledge and reality, freedom of the will, critical thinking, political philosophy and ethics.

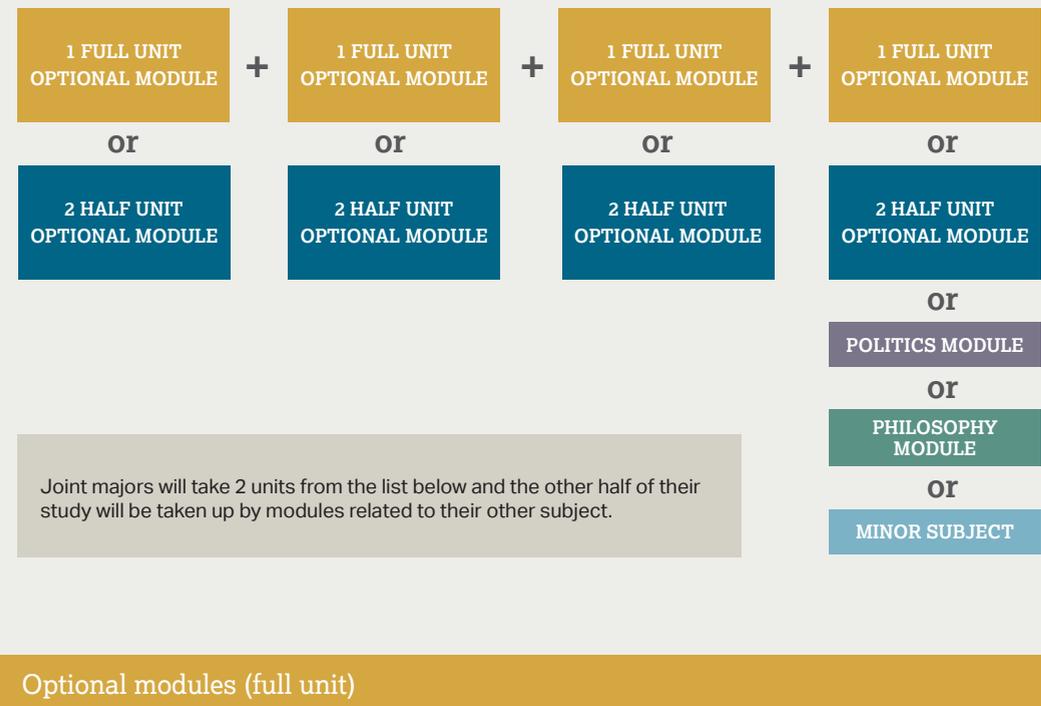
Minor subject

At Lancaster, you can include another subject alongside your major subject and depending on the choices you make, continue this up to and including your final year. You could choose something related like Sociology or Media and Cultural Studies or branch out further into something like Creative Writing, or a language.

Religious Studies BA (Hons)

Continued...

Year 2 modules



Ethics: Theory and Practice

You will develop an understanding of historical and contemporary approaches to ethics, exploring selected topics in moral philosophy, such as the nature, strength and weakness of consequentialism, deontology, and virtue theory.

Indian Politics, Society and Religion

You will examine the interplay between politics, society and religion in the world's largest democracy, India. Some of the main themes covered include democracy, secularism, religious minorities, and caste politics.

Constructing Ethics in Christianity and Islam

You will explore the emergence and construction of ethics within the context of two world religions: Christianity and Islam. You will examine the ways in which religious attitudes to ethical concern and practice are influenced by traditional, textual and cultural factors.

Western Philosophy and Religious Thought

You will think philosophically about religious issues; using the work of both classical and contemporary philosophers and religious thinkers, you will encounter some of the central philosophical questions raised by religious belief.

Optional modules (half unit)

Christianity in the Modern World: Traditions and Transformations

You will survey and critically examine the main themes, concepts, debates and approaches to the study of Christianity. You will develop an analytical and interpretive framework to understand competing Christian traditions and theologies in a historical context.

Islam: Tradition, Community and Contemporary Challenges

You will examine the historical formation of Islam; its renewal movements past and present; and modern reform discourses on gender, politics, and law. You will gain an understanding of continuities and discontinuities in the Islamic tradition in relation to religious authority, theology, politics, and contemporary practice.

Buddhism and Modernity in Asian Societies

You will develop knowledge and understanding of the important issues, concepts, debates, and approaches regarding Buddhism and modernity in Asian countries. You will consider the historical, social, political, and economic factors that have impacted on the development of Buddhism in respective societies.

Hinduism in the Modern World

You will critically examine the main themes, key concepts, debates and approaches to the study of Hinduism, paying particular attention to Hinduism in the modern world and to Hinduism's relationship with other religions of South Asia during and since the 19th century.

Religion in Society: Theories and Methods

You will critically examine the theoretical frameworks, methods, and approaches used to study religion sociologically. You will develop sociologically informed questions about religion that can serve as a basis for further enquiry (this will be particularly helpful if you choose to conduct your own field research in a dissertation module in year 3).

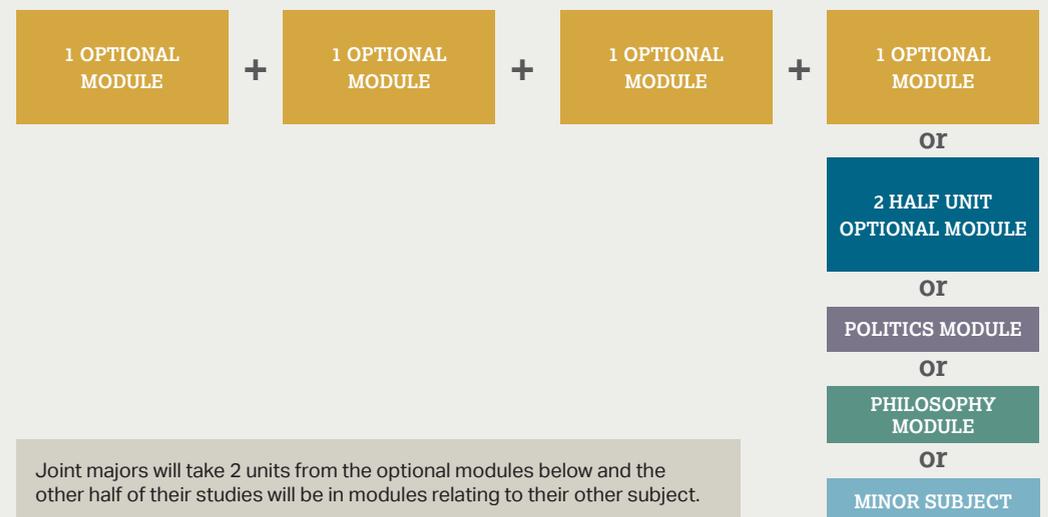
Sociology of Religion

You will be introduced to the sociological study of religion, with particular attention to two major themes: 1) looking at selected key figures in the history of the sociological study of religion, such as Marx, Weber, and Durkheim; and 2) relevant issues and contemporary debates, such as secularization and new religious fundamentalism.

Religious Studies BA (Hons)

Continued...

Year 3 modules



Optional modules

Indian Religious and Philosophical Thought

You will be introduced to major themes in Indian philosophy, focusing on the Hindu and Buddhist traditions. Beginning with philosophical sections in the Upanishads and the dialogues of the Buddha, the module will trace the development of Indian philosophy from the early to the classical periods.

Modern Religious and Atheistic Thought

You will examine and evaluate some of the most central issues in Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment Western religious and atheistic philosophical debates. Among other themes, you will consider postmodern critiques of modern atheism and the nature of the associated 'return of religion'.

New Religions and Alternative Spiritualities

Institutionalised religion is in decline, both in Britain and in northern Europe as a whole. But a great deal is happening 'beyond church and chapel'. In this module, you will explore whether Christianity is holding its own among those who do not go to church or if 'new' experiential and 'gently' institutionalized spiritualities of life are taking its place.

Reading Buddhism

You will examine Buddhist scriptures in the Theravada and Mahayana traditions. You will develop an understanding of some key concepts and ideas by reading select extracts of Buddhist texts in English translation.

Reading Islam

Religions may take on partly distinctive forms due to the history and traditions of particular regions or modern nation states. Islam is no exception. This course will examine varieties of Islam in a range of modern areas and countries such as Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Britain.

Religion in Schools

You will critically examine the teaching of religion in schools as it has developed since 1944, current controversies and possible futures. This module provides relevant knowledge and understanding for those going on to a teaching career in RE/ethics. Topics include social and political values in RE, pluralism and truth, spirituality in the curriculum, faith schools and secular worldviews. The focus is on the educational system in England and Wales but with reference to the rest of the UK and Europe.

Religion and Politics

You will focus on key contexts and developments in the inter-relationship between religion and politics across the world. Major themes of the module include, secularization, multiculturalism, and the resurgence of religion in politics.

PPR in India (study abroad)

You will spend four weeks at our partner institution in Bangalore, India in the summer between your 2nd and 3rd years. The programme in India includes daily lectures, seminars, excursions, and cultural activities. On your return to Lancaster, you will write a supervised dissertation on an aspect of religion, politics, or philosophy in an Indian context.

Modern Christian Thought

You will concentrate on Protestant Christian thinkers from the German-speaking world; these thinkers have dominated the development of Christian thought in Europe and America until very recent times, when various 'political theologies' (Black, feminist and liberationist) started to erode their influence.

The Ritual and Social Contexts of Spirit Possession

Working with some film and video footage amongst other sources, you will survey and examine the main themes, debates and approaches to ritualised spirit possession in a variety of social contexts.

Religion and Violence

You will examine the relationship between religion and violence, asking whether one can draw such associations between the two and whether one can develop any broader theoretical understandings about their relationship which we can use to enhance our understanding of religion in the modern world.

Media, Religion and Politics

You will examine the cultural and political relationships and intersections between media, religion and politics in national and global contexts; considering both old and new media and the transformative potential of the latter for participation and activism in religion and politics.

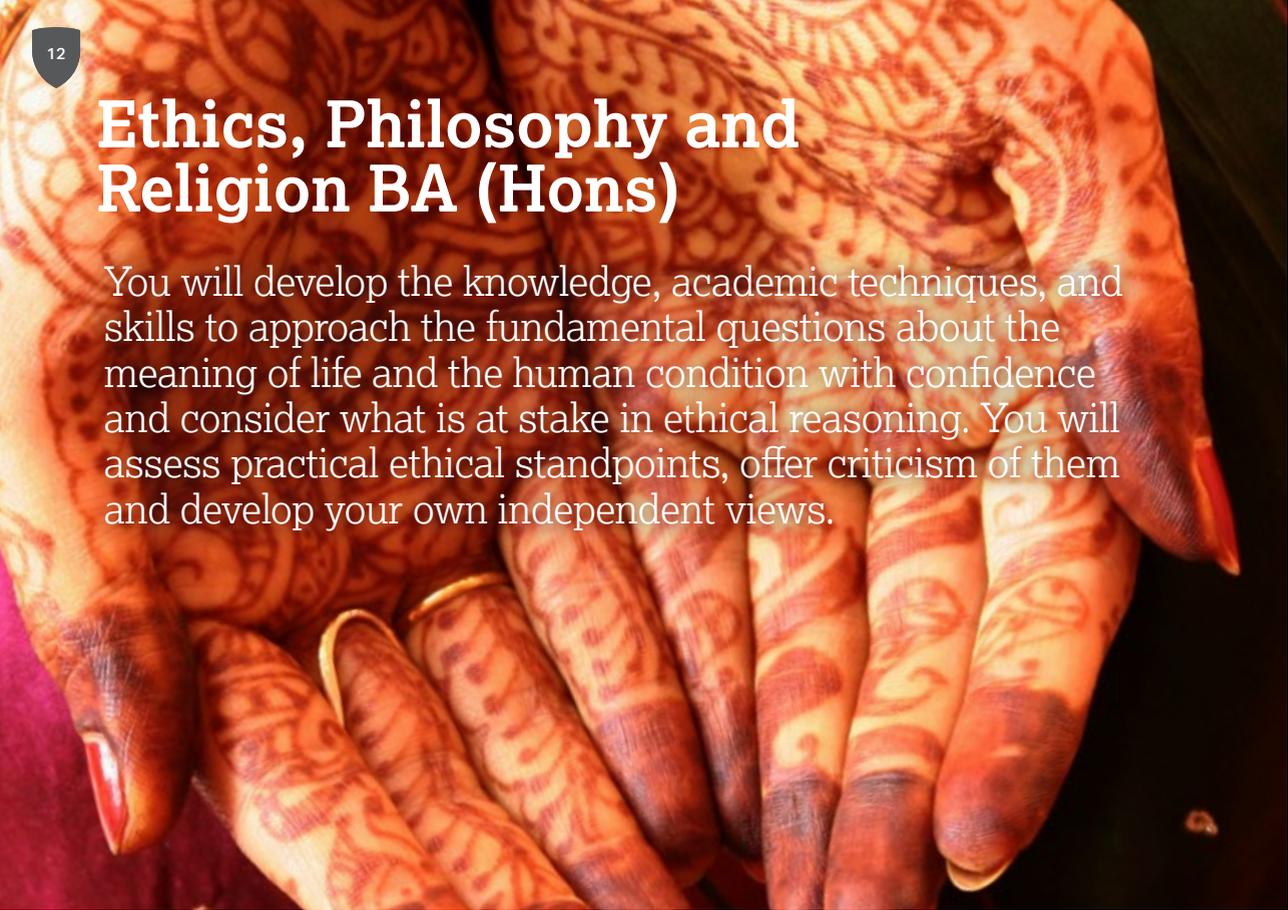
PPR in Education (school placement)

You will get first-hand experience of teaching through classroom observation, teacher assistance, and teaching small groups (under supervision). The module is organised and delivered collaboratively between LUSU Involve, the school/college where the placement is based, and the Department.



Ethics, Philosophy and Religion BA (Hons)

You will develop the knowledge, academic techniques, and skills to approach the fundamental questions about the meaning of life and the human condition with confidence and consider what is at stake in ethical reasoning. You will assess practical ethical standpoints, offer criticism of them and develop your own independent views.



Year 2 modules

ETHICS: THEORY AND PRACTICE

Provides students with an understanding of historical and contemporary approaches to ethics. You will explore selected topics in moral philosophy, such as the nature, strength and weakness of consequentialism, deontology, and virtue theory.

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CONSTRUCTING ETHICS IN CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

OR

WESTERN PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

+

4 OPTIONAL MODULES

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- History of Philosophy
- Modern Political Thought
- Introduction to Peace Studies
- Indian Politics, Society and Religion
- Christianity in the Modern World: Tradition and Transformations
- Islam: Tradition, Community and Contemporary Challenges
- Buddhism and Modernity in Asian Societies
- Hinduism in the Modern World
- Religion in Society: Theories and Methods
- Sociology of Religion

Year 1 modules

ETHICS, PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

You will study core themes and perspectives, including western and Asian philosophical and religious ethics, the authorities upon which ethical standpoints are grounded, and the implications of evolution for religion and ethics.

+

RELIGIONS OF THE MODERN WORLD

OR

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

+

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

OR

POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

OR

RELIGIONS OF THE MODERN WORLD

OR

MINOR SUBJECT

Year 3 modules

You will select 8 modules from the following:

- Continental Philosophy
- History of Twentieth Century Philosophy
- Moral, Legal and Political Philosophy
- Political Ideas: Liberal Thought
- Reading Political Theory
- Understanding External Intervention in Violent Conflicts
- Islamic Politics
- Contemporary Issues in Human Rights
- Indian Religious and Philosophical Thought
- Modern Religious and Atheistic Thought
- New Religions and Alternative Spiritualities
- Religion in Schools
- Religion and Politics
- PPR in India
- Modern Christian Thought
- The Ritual and Social Contexts of Spirit Possession
- Religion and Violence
- Media, Religion and Politics
- PPR in Education
- Religions in the Modern World
- Philosophy of Medicine
- Future Generations
- The Imagination
- Feminist Philosophy
- Dissertation

Career development, internships and study abroad

We encourage our students to maintain a strong focus on their career after graduation and to take advantage of the many opportunities to participate in enrichment activities such as studying abroad and undertaking work placements alongside their studies.

Study Abroad

Each year our students take advantage of opportunities to study abroad as a credit-bearing part of their degree programme in the USA and Canada. There are also a number of shorter, extra-curricular programmes to countries all around the world, such as China, Malaysia, and Ghana.

The Department of Politics, Philosophy and Religion in India

We run one of the oldest study abroad programmes operated by a UK university in India. In the summer following their second year, a group of our students stay at Visthar, an academy for Justice and Peace Studies, near Bangalore, southern India. There they meet people of different caste, class, and religious backgrounds and their experiences inform a dissertation module in the final year.

“Through studying at Visthar for three weeks, our knowledge of Indian politics, religions and philosophical thought was enhanced so much. Our five weeks of independently traveling afterwards meant we saw everything that we had learned at Lancaster in an empirical way. This opportunity was a fantastic way of learning about Indian religions and religious ways of life in a context so different to what we are used to. Everything we have learned has been so valuable, interesting and enjoyable.

Katie and Becky



The Richardson Institute Internships Programme

The Department of Politics, Philosophy and Religion, is home to the Richardson Institute which undertakes cutting-edge research in peace and conflict. Each year the Institute offers over 60 internships to students in the Department and through which undergraduates and postgraduates undertake research projects for external organisations. Research themes include Religion and Borders, and Religion and Conflict Situations.

“What makes the Department stand out for me is the opportunity to take on other projects such as the internship with the Richardson Institute for peace and conflict research. There are a wide variety of different projects which allow you to complete real world research for key clients such as the Ministry of Defence and Radicalisation Research amongst others. The internship allowed me to stand out more in summer internship applications in my second year and my experience was ultimately enough to gain me a place on the programme run by the Civil Service Fast Stream.

Grant Helm

Careers

The Department offers all students the opportunity to develop their skills and experience with a range of different employment paths in mind. You will be allocated an academic tutor, who will offer you regular one-to-one guidance on developing and recording the transferable skills and experience that will make you highly employable after your degree. We regularly hold career guidance workshops specifically geared to students of each of our core subjects.

Over the past several years, Religious Studies and Ethics, Philosophy and Religion graduates from Lancaster have gone on to pursue a wide range of careers, such as the following:

- Welfare-rights activism
- Criminal justice work
- Barrister
- Metropolitan Police Officer
- Translator/Interpreter
- Employee of the Home Office
- Human resources
- Business executive
- Secondary school teaching
- Paramedic
- Nurse
- Curator
- Producing the opening ceremony for the Olympic Games

